

Pam-Native converts

1834

Nacikova, an African Convert

A DIALOGUE

BY

ELIZABETH LOGAN ENNIS

Price, Two Cents



AFRICAN WOMEN CARRYING FOOD.

NACIKOVA, AN AFRICAN CONVERT

BY ELIZABETH LOGAN ENNIS.

Ndona Cikolo (Chē-kō'-lo), Missionary.

Nacikova (Na-che-kō'-va), native Christian woman.

[Ndona entering native hut, Nacikova gives her a low stool then sits down herself, then greets her caller.]

NACIKOVA. Kalunga (Ka'lōo-nga).

NDONA. Kalunga mai (mī), I hope you are well today.

NACIKOVA. I am well and you also, I hope.

NDONA. Ah, Nacikova nda kava (nda ka'-va), I am tired indeed. I have made many calls today, urging the women of your village to come to church tomorrow, and my heart is very weary, more weary than my feet. Tell me, my faithful friend, why you listened to the words of truth while your neighbors are so deaf and indifferent.

NACIKOVA. A Ndona, I was afraid. I was persecuted by my relatives; there was no hope in my heart. Our houses have no windows; yours let in the sunlight. It is that way, too, with our hearts. See, my hair is gray; many of my years are dead. This one year since I have known of the Father God is worth all the others.

NDONA. What was the fear? Why were you persecuted by your relatives? Can you tell me?

NACIKOVA. I was a little girl. I was gathering firewood with my sister who was older than I. A man was walking in the woods hunting for *olosia* (ōlō'-shai) fruit. We did not see him, and as my sister pulled down a dead limb from a tree it snapped and hit him. He was angry. We ran very fast and came to our own village. Not many days after that man was sick, and although the *ocimbanda* (ō-chē-mba'-nda) tried many strong charms, he died. Suku has ordained that only old men should die. He was not old, he was bewitched. By whom? Ah, how well I remember the day they divined to find who caused his death. I did not know why, but I would not go near where the drums were beating. Afterwards I knew. It was my sister and I who had put a spell upon him that day in the forest, his spirit had told the witch doctors so. There was much talk, and the man's wife said we must be killed. Angry men and women came to our hut and even laid their hands upon us, but my father's words prevailed at last. They would wait and divine again. And then in the night we stole away and went to a distant village.

A Ndona, I believe "the words," and that witchcraft is naught, but there are many strange things. I do not understand, but from that day peace fled our home. My sister and I suspected each other. She married, and when her baby came it died. Her husband was very angry and taunted her with witchcraft, and yet another baby died, and he was furious. While her body was yet weak she walked many days to a famous doctor, who gave her a charm warranted to give her a living child. And I, too, was a woman then, and when my first baby came I was so proud. Ah, he was strong and beautiful, and I put him on my back and went to my sister's house. I would show her my man-child. Ndona, next day my child was dead!

NDONA. O Nacikova, how many days was he?

NACIKOVA. Two days.

NDONA. And you—fed him gruel and went out in the wind and—

NACIKOVA. Yes, Ndona, I know now you have taught us, it is so, but then I thought it was my sister. "It is not enough that you have slain your own children," I cried, "but I take my strong and innocent child to your accursed house and I hold a corpse in my arms." The village was all in an uproar, and those words went on for years, until finally, because of the noise, we came here to this village.

NDONA. And your sister?

NACIKOVA. They condemned her to death as a witch.

NDONA. Not—*not* because of *you*, Nacikova?

NACIKOVA. No, Ndonga *Lameko* (Lāma'-kō). In the night time when I wake and sleep I am glad it was not I, but it is this way. If a person has once been accused he comes in for trouble whenever anything happens, and a relative of her husband's died on a journey and they accused her of having caused his death.

NDONA. But if he died on a journey, how could she?

NACIKOVA. Ah! Ndonga, you do not understand. Does absence or space matter to witches? After her death whenever misfortune came to the family *I* was the accused one. Their goats all died of disease, and upon me, unhappy one, they laid the blame. They came here and bound me hand and foot and took me away toward the coast. They would sell me because of the goats that were dead. This was after the words of God had come to our valley and I had been to hear them and I had begun to understand a little. When they bound me I said, "My trust is in God," but they took me away. At night when we camped they put my feet in an *ukumbi* (slave shackle—ōo-kōo'-mbē) and I prayed to God to still my heart. Five days we journeyed. Four nights we had slept, and that night we camped where there was a large caravan and many slaves. As I sat behind a bush eating my mush with shame and sorrow I heard them talking. Would they buy an old woman?

“She is still strong and can cultivate, but she will bear no more children.” Did not my heart die within me? The sun went down and the stars came out. I sat by the fire and waited. Suddenly I heard a voice! It was the voice of my husband!

He had hurried to collect a ransom and he was come to save me. “It is the Ndonga’s God,” I cried, “for I have prayed to Him. He is the ‘God of the Kind Heart,’ and it is He who turned the heart of my husband to me.” They accepted the ransom and I came back to my own village. Do you wonder that I listened to the words and was eager to accept them? God delivered me from my enemies and from my own wicked heart, and I praise Him every day.

NDONGA. I praise Him, too, because of you. Let us praise Him most of all by trying to teach all the other women about the “God of the Kind Heart.”

COSTUME

SKIRT, a piece of plain cloth fastened around the waist.

SHIRT with short sleeves.

CLOTH under the arms, beginning at left side and brought around the body to meet at the left side and tucked in (not too tight).

TURBAN, light colored handkerchief folded diagonally and then folded several times until about 2½ inches in middle and tied about head (knot in back).

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